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60/67

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 /064 W

----- 062360

P R 162044Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0437

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

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C O R R E C T E D COPY (DUE PARTIAL OMISSION SUBJECT & TEXT)

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, FR

SUBJECT: CHIRAC RESIGNS AS UDR SECRETARY GENERAL BUT
NOT AS LEADER OF THE GAULLISTS

SUMMARY: AT THE JUNE 14-15 UDR NATIONAL CONVENTION IN
NICE, JACQUES CHIRAC RESIGNED AFTER EXACTLY SIX MONTHS
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AS UDR SECRETARY-GENERAL, HAVING GIVEN THE GAULLIST

MOVEMENT A MUCH-NEEDED INJECTION OF SELF-CONFIDENCE. HE WAS IMMEDIATELY GIVEN THE TITLE OF QTE HONORARY SECRETARY GENERAL ENDQTE BY ACCLAMATION, AND IN FACT CONSOLIDATED HIS CONTROL OF THE PARTY. THE 7,000 DELEGATE, REPRESENTING A WIDE SPREAD OF AGES AND SOCIAL LEVELS, CLEARLY CONSIDER HIM THE UDR'S MENTOR AND REAL CHIEF. GISCARD UNDOUBTEDLY WILL BE IN FOR SUSTAINED GAULLIST PRESSURE IN THE AREA OF FRENCH FOREIGN RELATIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. APPROXIMATELY 7,000 LOCAL GAULLIST OFFICIALS AND MILITANTS GATHERED IN NICE JUNE 14-15 FOR THE FIRST UDR NATIONAL CONVENTION SINCE NOVEMBER 1973. AT THAT TIME, IN NANTES, THE STAR OF THE SHOW WAS JACQUES CHABAN-DELMAS AND CHIRAC WAS GIVEN A CHILLY RECEPTION AS POMPIDOU'S REPRESENTATIVE. IN NICE, CHABAN WAS NOT EVEN PRESENT AND THE MENTION OF POMPIDOU'S NAME BROUGHT FORTH A MINUTE OF RESPECTFUL SILENCE FROM THE ASSEMBLY. THE CONVENTION QUICKLY TRUNED INTO AN APOTHEOSIS OF JACQUES CHIRAC WHO - AS EVEN HIS OPPONENTS WITHIN THE MOVEMENT READILY ADMIT - VERY LIKELY SAVED THE UDR FROM SERIOUS INTERNAL STRIFE AND LOSS OF POLITICAL INFLUENCE BY HAVING HIMSELF ELECTED SECRETARY GENERAL LAST DECEMBER.

2. GAULLIST RECONCILIATION: IN THE CONVENTION'S WAKE, THE UDR IS MORE AT PEACE WITH ITSELF THAN AT ANY TIME SINCE CHABAN-DELMAS' DEFEAT AS THE GAULLIST PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE IN MAY 1974. OF THOSE GAULLISTS WHO EXPRESSED THEIR DISCONTENT LAST FALL AT THE UDR'S SEEMING IMPOTENCE, OR WHO LATER CRITICIZED CHIRAC'S ACCUMULATION OF POWERS AS PRIME MINISTER AND POLITICAL LEADER, ONLY TOW FAILED TO SHOW UP AT NICE: CHABAN-DELMAS (THE MENTION OF WHOSE NAME CALLED FORTH WARM APPLAUSE) AND JEAN CHARBONNEL, CHIRAC'S PERSONAL ENEMY WITHIN THE UDR AND A MAN NOW DEFINITELY ON THE OUTS. CHABAN, SPEAKING IN BORDEAUX, WASTED NO TIME IN EXPRESSING HIS APPROVAL OF CHIRAC'S RESIGNATION OF THE POST OF UDR SECRETARY GENERAL, CALLING IT A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.

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3. WHY DID CHIRAC QUIT? FAR FROM BEING AN ADMISSION OF FAILURE, CHIRAC'S RESIGNATION - WHICH THE 7,000 ASSEMBLED GAULLISTS SANCTIFIED BY NAMING HIM HONORARY SECRETARY GENERAL - IS A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE IN THE PARTY'S RECOVERY. MANY CYNICS INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE UDR SCOFFED AT CHIRAC'S DECLARATION LAST DECEMBER THAT HIS PARTY LEADERSHIP WAS ONLY TEMPORARY AND DESIGNED TO

GIVE NEW LIFE TO THE THEN-MORIBUND MOVEMENT. BUT BY JUNE, EVEN THE SEEMINGLY INEXHAUSTIBLE CHIRAC WAS BEGINNING TO FEEL THE STRAIN OF HOLDING DOWN TWO FULL-TIME POSITIONS OF GREAT RESPONSIBILITY. (DURING THE PAST SIX MONTHS, HE REPORTEDLY HAS BEEN WORKING 16-HOUR DAYS AND SMOKING TWO PACKS OF CIGARETTES DAILY). NO MATTER WHO SUCCEEDS CHIRAC ON A FULL-TIME BASIS, GAULLISTS ARE UNANIMOUSLY CONVINCED - AND IN FACT NEED TO FEEL - THAT CHIRAC REMAINS THE BOSS. THEIR REACTION TO HIS SURPRISING ANNOUNCEMENT HAS BEEN ONE OF GRATITUDE FOR HIS RESCUE OF THE MOVEMENT AND UNDERSTANDING THAT HE REMAINS ITS HEAD. CHIRAC DECLARED IN HIS RESIGNATION STATEMENT THAT HE WOULD NOT ACCEPT A UDR PRESIDENCY IF IT WERE OFFERED HIM. HE DOES NOT HAVE TO. THE BAULLIST MOVEMENT, WITH ITS

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USIA-06 /064 W

----- 060266

P R 162044Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0438

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TRADITION OF STRONG, ALMOST THEOLOGICAL LEADERSHIP, IS FEELING RENEWED VIGOR UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF THE MAN WHO SAVED IT LAST DECEMBER AND WHO IS ESSENTIAL TO GISCARD AS THE LEADER OF THE LARGEST ELEMENT OF THE PRESIDENTIAL MAJORITY.

4. THE INTERIM LEADERSHIP: A UDR NATIONAL COMMITTEE
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MEETING IS TO TAKE PLACE WITHIN A MONTH FOR THE PURPOSE OF NAMING A NEW SECRETARY GENERAL. IN THE MEANTIME, CHIRAC HAS NAMED STATE SECRETARY FOR VETERANS AFFAIRS ANDRE BORD AS THE UDR'S INTERIM SECRETARY GENERAL. BORD, 52 YEARS OLD AND A STRASBOURG INTIMATE OF FOURTH REPUBLIC CENTRIST PRIME MINISTER PIERRE PFLIMLIN, HAS LONG BEEN A RELIABLE PARTY WORKHORSE WHO SHOWED NO PARTICULAR FLASHES OF POLITICAL GENIUS. NOBODY WAS MORE SURPRISED THAN BORD HIMSELF WHEN CHIRAC INFORMED HIM OF HIS CHOICE TWO HOURS BEFORE HIS RESIGNATION AND SHORTLY AFTER HE HAD INFORMED THE DEPUTY SECRETARIES GENERAL OF HIS DECISION.

5. WHO ARE THE GAULLISTS? CHIRAC CLAIMS TO HAVE RESERVED HIS DECISION OF REIS POSTPONED HIS DECISION ON RESIGNATION UNTIL HE COULD GAUGE THE MOOD OF THE NATIONAL CONVENTION ITSELF. IF THIS IS SO, IT IS NOT HARD TO UNDERSTAND WHY HE DECIDED AS HE DID. THE 7,000 GAULLISTS IN NICE WERE AN IMPRESSIVE MIXTURE OF OLD AND YOUNG, MEN AND WOMEN, EXECUTIVES, SMALL BUSINESSMEN AND LOWER-LEVEL WHITE COLLAR WORKERS FILLING A VAST HALL DOMINATED BY ENORMOUS PORTRAITS OF DE GAULLE AND POMPIDOU AND A SEVENTEEN-METER-HIGH CROSS OF LORRAINE. AN IMPRESSIVE YOUTH DELEGATION WAS STRONGLY AND VOCIFEROUSLY IN EVIDENCE, REFLECTING THE SUCCESS OF CHIRAC'S PROTEGE ROBERT GROSSMANN IN ATTRACTING YOUNG PEOPLE INTO THE UDR (WHICH HAD ALWAYS KEPT THEM AT ARM'S LENGTH). SINCE THE FIRST OF THIS YEAR, OVER 10,500 NEW MEMBERS HAVE JOINED THE UDR, OF WHOM ABOUT HALF ARE UNDER 25 YEARS OF AGE.

6. THE OLD GUARD RETURNS: OLDER GAULLIST LEADERS

(MESSMER, GUICHARD, DEBRE, SANGUINETTI, COUVE DE MURVILLE) WERE WELL REPRESENTED, AND ALL EXCEPT GUICHARD SPOKE - GUICHARD SPENT MOST OF HIS TIME IN THE LOBBY SIGNING COPIES OF HIS BOOK. DEBRE, A MASTERFUL ORATOR WHOSE APPEARANCE AT UDR CONVENTIONS HAS BECOME SOMETHING OF A FIXTURE, MOVED THE CROWD TO NEAR-FRENZY BY INTONING A PASSIONATE HARANGUE ON THE UNIQUENESS OF FRANCE'S MORAL RECTITUDE AND THE NECESSITY OF STANDING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ALOOF FROM QTE FOREIGN HEGEMONIES ENDQTE OF ALL KINDS.

7. WHAT WAS THE NAME OF THAT PRESIDENT? DURING TWO DAYS OF SPEECHES, GISCARD WAS NEVER REFERRED TO BY NAME, ONLY AS QTE THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC ENDQTE. MANY SPEAKERS - AND CHIRAC IN PARTICULAR - TOOK GREAT PAINS TO STRESS THAT THE UDR IS THE LARGEST ELEMENT OF THE PRESIDENTIAL MAJORITY, THAT IT HAS GRACIOUSLY CONSENTED TO LEND A HELPING HAND TO THE OTHER PARTIES IN THAT MAJORITY, INCLUDING GISCARD'S INDEPENDENT REPUBLICANS, AND HAS NO INTENTION OF BECOMING QTE GISCARDIZED ENDQTE. MASTERFULLY TREADING A FINE LINE, CHIRAC HAD SOMETHING FOR EVERYBODY IN NICE: ORTHODOXY FOR THE OLD TIMERS; ENTHUSIASM FOR THE YOUNG PEOPLE; AND ENOUGH OF

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USIA-06 /064 W

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P R 162044Z JUN 75
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0439
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
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GISCARD'S KEY WORDS ON SOCIAL REFORM SCATTERED THROUGH
HIS SPEECHES TO KEEP THE PRESIDENT HAPPY.

8. WHITHER THE UDR? THE GAULLISTS HAVE EMERGED FROM
THEIR YEAR OF TROUBLES NUMERICALLY AS STRONG AS EVER
(255,000 MEMBERS OF WHOM 144,000 ARE PAID UP, ACCORDING
TO PARTY STATISTICS). THANKS TO CHIRAC'S PRAGMATISM,
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THEY HAVE NOT ONLY SURVIVED BUT HAVE FOILED
GISCARD'S HOPES OF ABSORBING THE UDR BY ATTRITION. THE
GAULLIST MOVEMENT HAS ADJUSTED TO FRENCH POLITICAL
REALITY THANKS TO CHIRAC, MOVING ONLY AS MUCH AS
NECESSARY IN THE DIRECTION OF GISCARD'S DOMESTIC
LIBERALISM AND SIMULTANEOUSLY FORCING GISCARD TO HOLD
THE LINE IN CERTAIN KEY FOREIGN POLICY AREAS,
PARTICULARLY DEFENSE. ANOTHER MAJOR THEME WHICH RAN
THROUGH THE TWO-DAY MEETING WAS LAW AND ORDER,
REFLECTING THE DEEP-SEATED TRAUMA OF MAY 1968 AMONG
YOUNG AND OLD ALIKE. AFTER A DIFFICULT PERIOD OF
ADJUSTMENT, THE UDR IS NOW WHOLLY CHIRAC'S PARTY, TO DO
WITH AS HE WILL. HE HAS NO SERIOUS COMPETITORS.
FOR GISCARD AND PONIATOWSKI THE UDR REMAINS THE MAJOR

FACTOR IN THE MAJORITY EQUATION AND IMPOSSIBLE

TO IGNORE OR BELITTLE.

9. IMPLICATIONS FOR GISCARD: WHILE SOME CONSERVATIVE GAULLISTS SUSPECT CHIRAC OF BEING INSUFFICIENTLY DEVOTED TO ORTHODOX POSITIONS OF QTE NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE ENDQTE AND OTHER GAULLIST SHIBBOLETHS, HE HAS PROVEN THAT HE WILL BE AS GAULLIST AS NECESSARY TO KEEP HIS POLITICAL BASE HAPPY, WHILE GISCARD FACES SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES WITHOUT THAT POLITICAL BASE. IT WAS INTERESTING FOR THOSE OF US WHO MUST CONSTANTLY DEAL WITH FRENCH NATIONALISM ON A THEORETICAL BASIS TO WITNESS FIRSTHAND AN EVENT ATTENDED BY MANY THOUSANDS OF ORDINARY FRENCHMEN AND APPRECIATE HOW DEEP THE SENTIMENT RUNS. IT IS, IN FACT, THE GLUE THAT HOLDS THE UDR TOGETHER, A FACT OF WHICH GISCARD CANNOT FAIL TO TAKE NOTICE WHEN HE RUMINATES ABOUT FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY AND THE IMPORTANCE OF THE UDR TO HIS MAJORITY.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SECRETARY GENERAL, POLITICAL PARTIES, PERSONNEL RESIGNATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 JUN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: greeneet
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975PARIS15549
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750209-1093
From: PARIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750647/aaaabqhe.tel
Line Count: 350
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 7
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: greeneet
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 APR 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <16 APR 2003 by ElyME>; APPROVED <01 OCT 2003 by greeneet>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CHIRAC RESIGNS AS UDR SECRETARY GENERAL BUT NOT AS LEADER OF THE GAULLISTS
TAGS: PINT, FR, UDR, (CHIRAC, JACQUES)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006